

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this](#) [page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 08GENEVA504, EGYPT'S AMBASSADOR SHOUKRY AND HIS AGGRESSIVE \

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08GENEVA504**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08GENEVA504	2008-07-02 17:12	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	US Mission Geneva

Appears in these articles:

http://www.letemps.ch/swiss_papers

VZCZCXYZ0008
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGV #0504/01 1841712
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 021712Z JUL 08
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6675
INFO RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1980
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2777

2008-07-02 17:12:00 08GENEVA504 US Mission Geneva CONFIDENTIAL 08USMISSIONGENEVA256|08USMISSIONGENEVA495 VZCZCXYZ0008\
RR RUEHWEB\
\

DE RUEHGV #0504/01 1841712\
ZNY CCCCC ZZH\
R 021712Z JUL 08\
FM USMISSION GENEVA\
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6675\
INFO RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE\
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1980\
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2777\
C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 000504 \
\

SIPDIS \
\

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/19/2018 \
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [UNHRC](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPT'S AMBASSADOR SHOUKRY AND HIS AGGRESSIVE \
DELEGATION IN GENEVA \
\

REF: A. GENEVA 256 \
1B. GENEVA 495 \
\

Classified By: Ambassador Warren W. Tichenor. Reasons: 1.4 (b/d). \
\

11. (C) SUMMARY: Led by Ambassador Sameh Shoukry, Egypt's \
delegation in Geneva has stood out for its activist and at \
times aggressive approach to Geneva multilateral diplomacy, \
in pursuit of goals the U.S. does not support. This has been \
most noticeable in the Human Rights Council, where Egypt has \
been arguably the most difficult delegation from our \
perspective, pushing hard -- and often effectively -- for \
many troubling Organization of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) \
resolutions and amendments, such as one that subverted the \
mandate on freedom of expression. Egypt's heavy-handed \
approach toward the Council's African Group, of which it is \
regional coordinator, has become sufficiently resented that, \
despite its efforts, that Group selected Nigeria rather than \
Djibouti to assume that body's presidency. In the World \
Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Egypt also pursued \
an unhelpful stance in seeking the extension of the term of \
the corrupt incumbent Director General. Such behavior \
contrasts with Shoukry's polished Western veneer. With \
Shoukry reportedly slated to become ambassador to the U.S. in \
the fall, we offer this snapshot of him and his delegation's \
\

conduct in Geneva fora. END SUMMARY. \

12. (C) When word spread in Geneva that the Egyptian \ government planned to make Sameh Shoukry its ambassador in \ Washington, it raised eyebrows in many quarters here. As \ Egypt's ambassador in Geneva since September 2005, Shoukry \ had established himself as an active, well-spoken, and \ effective figure in informal diplomatic settings, but as a \ tough negotiator known for pursuing goals often at variance \ with U.S. policies. On two occasions in recent years when \ working level officials of the U.S. Mission brought visitors \ to the Egyptian Mission to meet Shoukry, he was curt and \ rude, in both cases rising to his feet after a short time to \ signal that the meeting was over. \

AGGRESSIVE PRO-OIC STANCE IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL \

13. (C) The Egyptian delegation has thrown its weight around \ most aggressively, perhaps, in the Human Rights Council, of \ which Egypt is a member. Its stance has often tracked with \ that of other more hard-line OIC states, but Egypt has \ usually taken the lead and assumed a sharp tone that has \ occasionally earned its officers the "attack-dog" moniker. A \ few key examples: \

-- Egypt has been in the forefront in pressing aggressively \ for many of the most troubling OIC initiatives in the \ Council. In the March Council session, Shoukry joined with \ his counterparts from Pakistan and Cuba to engineer \ amendments to the Freedom of Expression mandate that lay the \ groundwork to subvert that mandate (ref a). As on numerous \ other occasions, Egypt's diplomats worked the plenary hall \ with impressive effectiveness to get the required votes in \ the end-game to that resolution's amendment, out-hustling and \ outmaneuvering those, most notably Canada and Slovenia, that \ sought to resist the OIC's initiative. \

-- Shoukry and his delegation have been sharply critical of \ Israel during the Council's discussions of that subject, and \ their tone has sometimes diverged from that of the Egyptian \ government as it engaged in Middle East peace process \ discussions. Just days after his foreign minister was quoted \ as urging Palestinian restraint to avoid harming the peace \ process, for instance, Shoukry's March 6 Council intervention \ centered on Palestinians resisting foreign occupation and \ exercising their right to self-defense, without mention of \ the efforts toward peace. \

-- With the Council still defining the informal modalities \ for much of its functioning, Egypt has taken the lead in \ seeking to limit the voice given to NGOs during both the \ plenary sessions and the newly-formed Universal Periodic \ Review process. Although Shoukry himself has often abstained \ from direct involvement in the effort, his officers have \ repeatedly called points of order and otherwise challenged \ the statements of NGOs, asserting, for instance, that those \ statements do not directly address the topic at hand. The \ Egyptian interventions have sometimes been disrespectful in \ tone, not only to the NGOs but on occasion to the Council \ President as well. \

-- Most recently, Egypt led the charge against a pro-Israel \ NGO's statement linking Islam with human rights abuses such \ as female genital mutilation and honor killings of women. \

Beyond aggressively attacking the NGO, announcing that "Islam \ will not be crucified," Egypt pressed to establish a general \ principle that Islam and other religions should not be \ criticized in the Council on the grounds that their tenets \ might encourage human rights problems (ref b). \

14. (C) Egypt also has shown its aggressiveness in its \ handling of the Council's Africa Group, of which it has been \ and continues to serve as coordinator. In Council sessions, \ it has on occasion staked out positions on behalf of the \ Group that other African states have privately told us they \ had not signed on to or even been informed of in advance, and \ we understand that it has at times sought to run roughshod \ over opposing views during the Group's internal meetings. \

SOME SETBACKS FOR EGYPT \

15. (C) On a number of occasions, this has succeeded. Partly, \ this is because many African delegations lack the manpower in \ the Council to be fully engaged and because some of those \ delegations prefer not to rock the boat in their Group, \ several African diplomats have told us. Partly, it is \ because some African delegations see Egypt as ensuring that \ the West does not push Africa around. Egypt's \ heavy-handedness fell short, however, when it sought to send \ a list of candidates, allegedly supported by the Africa \ Group, to become the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. \ That list would have included at least one former Egyptian \ diplomat, Ibrahim Salama, who is an important figure in the \ Office of the High Commissioner but also maintains close ties \ with Egypt's delegation in Geneva. Ethiopia and Algeria were \ among several African delegations that successfully objected, \ arguing that UN SyG Ban Ki-Moon had solicited nominations \ from individual countries rather than from regional groupings. \

16. (C) Such efforts by Egypt, as well as its often \ heavy-handed approach to its Africa Group colleagues, have \

elicited resentment from some in that group. That resentment \ apparently contributed to Egypt's failure to get the Group to \ select Djibouti, which the Egyptian delegation strongly \ supported, to assume the Council presidency last month, when \ the Group exercised its right, by virtue of regional \ rotation, to select the president for the coming year. \ Djibouti was defeated by Nigeria by an 18-15 vote in an \ Africa Group vote on the issue, and Nigeria's Ambassador \ Martin Uhomoibhi became the president. Although other \ factors, such as rivalry between predominantly Muslim and \ non-Muslim states, also came into play, Djibouti was widely \ seen as a proxy for Egypt. (Egypt itself had initially \ expressed interest in the presidency, but reportedly backed \ away because of Shoukry's planned departure from Geneva.) \

AN UNHELPFUL POSTURE IN WIPO \

----- \

17. (C) In WIPO, Egypt has been at the forefront of efforts to \ obstruct the U.S.-led campaign to remove the corrupt Sudanese \ Director General, Kamil Idris. Shoukry worked closely with \ the Algerian PermRep to coordinate the Africa Group's \ opposition to taking any action on an internal WIPO audit \ report that documented misconduct by Idris. Many in Geneva \ believe that Shoukry was in part motivated by the fact that \ Idris had hired his son to work at WIPO through a \ non-competitive appointment. (Idris had similarly given \ lucrative appointments to the children of other key member \ state representatives, including the Algerian PermRep.) \

18. (C) During the year-long campaign that eventually resulted \ in Idris' agreeing to leave a year early and elections to \ choose a successor, Shoukry apparently locked horns with \ Nigeria's Uhomoibhi, who was serving as the president of \ WIPO's General Assembly. At one point, Shoukry even went so \ far as to state that Uhomoibhi's conduct as president did not \ comport with being "a good African." By some accounts, \ Shoukry decided to seek revenge in the Human Rights Council \ by encouraging Djibouti's ambassador to run against Uhomoibhi \ for the Council presidency. \

SHOUKRY'S WESTERN VENEER \

----- \

19. (C) Shoukry's behavior in multilateral fora contrasts \ sharply with his behavior in social settings, at least when \ dealing with Western diplomats. In such situations, he can \ be charming and is comfortable socially, as is his wife. At \ his home, which is furnished in Western style, he is a \ gracious host. He has an excellent command of social \ protocol. He knows the U.S. well, can speak about American \ sports and culture, and reminisces fondly about his years in \

grade school in the Washington, D.C. area. Yet even in his \ personal comportment, he reveals moments of heavy-handedness, \ as in the derisive way in which he treats his driver. \

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION \

----- \

110. (SBU) Born in 1952, Shoukry and his wife Suzy have two \ sons, and became grandparents for the first time recently. A \ career diplomat, he has served in Vienna (where he was \ ambassador), New York, London and Buenos Aires in addition to \ stints in Cairo. He speaks fluent English -- probably the \ best command of English among all the OIC ambassadors in \ Geneva -- and we understand he also speaks Spanish. \

COMMENT \

----- \

111. (C) Shoukry's confrontational approach in Geneva has at \ times undermined U.S. interests in a number of Geneva-based \ organizations. Apparently the Egyptians calculate that they \ can pursue goals at odds with U.S. policies without much fear \ of bilateral retribution. Indeed, as one Ethiopian diplomat \ commented to us, Shoukry has behaved in the Council in ways \ that do not reflect the huge support the U.S. provides Egypt \ or the good bilateral U.S.-Egyptian relationship. The \ Geneva-based multilaterals, and most particularly the Human \ Rights Council, provide opportunities for the Egyptians to \ burnish pro-OIC and G-77 policies to please domestic and \ regional audiences. Egyptian diplomats themselves have \ occasionally acknowledged that point to us, saying that \ Shoukry is simply implementing orders from Cairo and that he \ will change his ways when he moves to Washington. That said, \ it is clear that despite a charming veneer in social \ settings, Shoukry can be harsh and aggressive, and he allows \ his delegation to act that way, sometimes with a vengeance. \

TICHENOR \